

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KARACH 01363 221138Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 SY-05
A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05
SCS-03 SCA-01 /075 W
-----221145Z 037596 /15

O 221034Z MAR 77
FM AMCONSUL KARACHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1488
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 1363

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN KARACHI

1. SUMMARY: MARCH 22 WAS AN ESSENTIALLY NORMAL WORK-DAY IN THE AREAS OF KARACHI NOT UNDER CURFEW, BUT THE PNA HAS CALLED FOR LATE AFTERNOON DEMONSTRATIONS IN VARIOUS PLACES AND THE POLICE REPORTEDLY PLAN TO CONTAIN THEM BY FORCE IF NECESSARY. PRESS COVERAGE OF SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IS INCREASINGLY THOROUGH AND EDITORIAL CRITICISM INCREASINGLY POINTED. THE PNA LEADERSHIP IS MAINTAINING A HARD LINE ON ITS STANDING DEMANDS, AND SEEMS TO BE GAINING CONFIDENCE FROM THE CONTINUED FIRMNESS OF ITS IMPRESSIVE POPULAR SUPPORT. AMERICANS CONTINUE TO BE LITTLE AFFECTED BY THE SECURITY SITUATION EXCEPT FOR THE INCONVENIENCE OCCASIONED BY THE CURFEW.
END SUMMARY

2. AS OF MID-AFTERNOON MARCH 22 HAS BEEN A VIRTUALLY NORMAL DAY IN THE PARTS OF KARACHI NOT UNDER CURFEW.
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PAGE 02 KARACH 01363 221138Z

ATTENDANCE AT WORK IS GOOD; PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS FUNCTIONING, AND THE PORT IS OPERATING IN NORMAL FASHION. IN THE AREAS WHERE IT APPLIES THE CURFEW REMAINS IN EFFECT BUT WAS TEMPORARILY LIFTED FROM 0700 TO 0900 AND WILL BE LIFTED AGAIN FROM 1500 TO 1700. (CONTRARY TO PREVIOUS REPORTS, IN OUR LATEST CONSULATATION WITH CITY AUTHORITIES THEY STATED THAT THE CURFEW APPLIES

ONLY TO WEST KARACHI AND THE LANDHI/KORANGI SECTION OF EAST KARACHI; THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATE PLANS TO EXTEND THE SCOPE OF THE CURFEW BUT NEITHER IS THERE ANY SIGN OF THE CURFEW ENDING SOON.)

3. REPORTS INDICATE THAT THERE WERE ONLY A FEW INCONSEQUENTIAL INCIDENTS THE MORNING OF MARCH 22. HOWEVER, PNA BULLETIN BOARDS AROUND TOWN HAVE CALLED FOR DEMONSTRATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PNA DEMANDS IN 23 SPECIFIC LOCATIONS IN KARACHI DURING THE AFTERNOON. MOST OF THE LOCATIONS ARE IN THE CURFEW AREA AND THE DEMONSTRATIONS THERE ARE SCHEDULED FOR THE 1500 - 1700 INTERVAL WHEN THE CURFEW IS TO BE LIFTED. THE OTHER LOCATIONS, INCLUDING SEVERAL ALONG THE HERETOFORE PEACEFUL DRIGH ROAD CORRIDOR, ARE TO BE ACTIVATED AT 1700, IN PRESUMED VIOLATION OF SECTION 144. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE POLICE PLAN TO SURROUND EACH OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS TO PREVENT PROCESSIONS FROM DEVELOPING, AND WILL RESORT TO TEARGAS IF THE DEMONSTRATIONS DO NOT REMAIN PEACEFUL AND LOCALIZED.

4. BOTH VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS COVERAGE OF SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING STATEMENTS BY THE PNA, IS BECOMING MORE EXTENSIVE DAY BY DAY. WE UNDERSTAND FROM JOURNALIST SOURCES THAT THIS RESULTS IN PART FROM THE COLLECTIVE DEMANDS OF EDITORS ON CHIEF MINISTER JATOI FOR A FREER HAND IN REPORTING THE NEWS. THE EDITORS IN TURN HAVE BEEN UNDER PRESSURE FROM THEIR REBELLIOUS NEWSMEN TO CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 KARACH 01363 221138Z

THE SAME END. EVEN A MARCH 21 PRESS CONFERENCE BY SHER BAZ MAZARI AND SHAH NOORANI, PNA LEADERS JUST RELEASED FROM DETENTION, WAS EXTENSIVELY IF NOT FULLY REPORTED. THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT THE PRESS CLUB AND WAS WELL ATTENDED BY PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS AND FIVE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. THE TWO MEN WERE ACCORDED SOMETHING OF A HERO'S WELCOME AND IN THEIR REMARKS TOOK A HARD LINE PARALLEL TO THAT ADOPTED BY THE PNA COUNCIL IN LAHORE. THEY REITERATED THE STANDARD PNA DEMANDS AND DECLARED THAT THEIR CAMPAIGN TO OVERTURN THE ELECTION WOULD CONTINUE.

5. A VARIETY OF SOURCES STRENGTHENTHE GROWING IMPRESSION THAT POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE PNA CAUSE IS UNSHAKEN IF NOT IN FACT INCREASING. THE EARLIER WELCOME ACCORDED THE ARMY BY PNA SUPPORTERS AS IT TOOK OVER SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES IN KARACHI IS REPORTED TO BE FADING IN THE FACE OF TOUGH, EVEN BRUTAL ARMY ACTION TO ENFORCE THE CURFEW. A NUMBER OF

CURFEW VIOLATORS HAVE BEEN SHOT AND IT NOW SEEMS
CLEAR THAT THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST SPORADIC DELIBERATE
VIOLATIONS OF THE CURFEW.

6. A FEW AMERICANS HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES COINCIDENTALLY
IN AREAS WHERE STONES WERE BEING THROWN AT AUTOMOBILES
DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO
INJURIES AND NO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO CARS. ONE
AMERICAN IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY MAROONED
IN AN AREA UNDER CURFEW. OTHERWISE BOTH RESIDENT
AND VISITING AMERICANS HAVE BEEN GOING ABOUT THEIR
DAILY AFFAIRS UNHINDERED EXCEPT FOR THE LIMITATIONS
IMPOSED BY THE CURFEW IN CERTAIN AREAS AND THE
PARALYSIS OF PUBLIC LIFE INDICED BY YESTERDAY'S HARTAL.

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